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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2922
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0738
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0121
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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0210
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1278
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3319
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2705
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000186

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [EFIN](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN: RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR LAMENTS OWN AID
PACKAGE, POLITICS OF WATER

REF: A. BISHKEK 170

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 162

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Classified By: Amb. Tatiana Gfoeller, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Russian Ambassador Vlasov told the Ambassador March 4 about his concern that the \$2.3 billion Russian aid package to the Kyrgyz Republic might be undermined by the corruption of Kyrgyz officials. He added that based on his March 4 conversation with Kyrgyz Prime Minister Chudinov, the Kyrgyz lack plans on how to build the Kambarata 1 hydroelectric station, the main target of the Russian aid package. Vlasov also lamented Russian involvement in Central Asian water and energy squabbles. He further said that Russia would be putting additional resources in trying to maintain Russian language education in the Kyrgyz Republic. End summary.

Money, Money, Money

[1](#)2. (C) During a March 4 lunch honoring departing Chinese Ambassador Zhang Yannian, the Ambassador engaged Russian Ambassador Valentin Vlasov in a conversation about the status of the pledged \$2.3 billion Russian aid package announced by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in early February (ref A). Usually something of a reliable iconoclast in his pronouncements, Vlasov did not disappoint this time either. He openly expressed his displeasure with Russia giving "so much money" to the Kyrgyz, and then lamented the corruption that would steer any such funds away from the key goal -- the construction of the Kambarata 1 hydroelectric station -- and into the pockets of greedy Kyrgyz officials.

[1](#)3. (C) Vlasov told the Ambassador that Kyrgyz Prime Minister Igor Chudinov and other Kyrgyz officials are already

"dividing the spoils." Recounting an earlier March 4 meeting with Chudinov, Vlasov said he asked for a plan outlining how the Kyrgyz Republic would utilize the funds and build the Kambarata 1 facility. According to Vlasov, Chudinov replied that "you (Russia) are building Kambarata." Vlasov disabused Chudinov of this notion, and noted that Russia is supplying the funding, but not the workers.

¶4. (C) Vlasov, reflecting on his conversation, told the Ambassador that "it is outrageous to send labor here to work; they still have a Soviet-era mentality with the Russians building everything for them." Vlasov said he told Chudinov that "you should find skilled labor to build Kambarata," to which Chudinov apparently replied, "we do not have any skilled labor." Vlasov openly expressed his belief that if the Russian funds do arrive, the Kambarata 1 project will not be built, and the funds will be squandered. (Comment: Vlasov may be concerned that he will be held accountable for the disposition of the pledged aid package. End comment.)

Politics of Regional Water and Energy

¶5. (C) The Ambassador raised recent Russian interest in regional water and energy supply problems in Central Asia. Vlasov claimed that the Kyrgyz had released too much water from the Toktogul reservoir (which supplies the main Kyrgyz power generating electric plants) to sell electricity off-book to the Kazakhs -- a step he believed had enriched Kyrgyz energy czars but diminished available water supplies. "I know places in Kazakhstan that received this water," Vlasov continued, "and this is proof again of Kyrgyz corruption."

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¶6. (C) The Ambassador inquired about President Medvedev's recent visit to Uzbekistan, and his comments about the need for regional agreement on infrastructure affecting water supplies. "I never criticize my President," Vlasov responded, "but, let's face it, the feckless states of Central Asia can not work out these issues on their own. Yet if we Russians tell them how to resolve their problems, they will all immediately agree on one thing: to blame us." However, he added, Medvedev wants to be able to mediate the issue.

The Rise of Islam

¶7. (C) Vlasov then turned to his perennial fears of growing Islamic fundamentalism in the Kyrgyz Republic. "When I arrived here two years ago," he said, "the main mosque was able to accommodate all those who came to prayer." "Now," he continued, "they are filling the surrounding garden and neighboring streets at prayer time, stopping traffic." Vlasov stressed that this development was troubling, and reiterated his oft-repeated suggestion that the United States and Russia cooperate against Islamic extremism and narco-trafficking.

Russian Fading Away?

¶8. (C) The Ambassador asked Vlasov about the collapse of Russian language education in rural areas of the Kyrgyz Republic as ethnic Russian teachers depart for the Russian Federation and Russian-educated Kyrgyz retire or move to the cities. Vlasov acknowledged the problem, and said that Russia provides 40,000 Russian-language textbooks annually to Kyrgyz schools. However, previous shipments contained books printed for students in the Russian Federation, he noted. Future consignments, Vlasov explained, would be printed in Bishkek on a new printing press the Russians are setting up and contain a "Central Asian perspective." He added that Russia would be funding a Russian language teacher training

center to be run by the Kyrgyz Slavic University.

Comment

19. (C) Vlasov has become increasingly open in his comments to the Ambassador, as well as in voicing criticisms about corruption and business practices in the Kyrgyz Republic, and his disdain for Kyrgyz government leaders is thinly veiled. It is still surprising that he should be criticizing his own government's aid package -- especially since it is widely perceived as buying Russia the closure of Manas Air Base.
GFOELLER